Effectiveness of Knowledge Seeking Behaviors Embedded in Social Networks:
A Perspective of Individuals in Workplaces

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Abstract
In organizations, successful knowledge management is determined by individual workers who engage in two modes of knowledge seeking behaviors: exploitation and exploration. To understand the effectiveness of knowledge behaviors, we define individual exploitation and exploration behaviors in terms of different knowledge outcomes, relevance to tasks and pertinence to situations. Today, social media encourages individual workers to access external and internal sources through formal and informal communications. This paper explains individual embeddedness in virtual knowledge networks, based on the scope of knowledge sources (i.e., external/internal) and the types of ties (i.e., formal/informal) to these knowledge sources. We then propose a contingency framework of how individual embeddedness in knowledge networks enhances the effectiveness of knowledge seeking behaviors, and thereby aim to provide theoretical contributions and managerial implications for knowledge management in social networks.

1. Introduction
The Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the firm focuses on knowledge-oriented capabilities as key strategic drivers to derive competitive advantages in industrial markets [1, 2]. KBV suggests that these competitive advantages can be sustained by cycles of new knowledge generation, outcomes of continuous conversion of tacit and explicit knowledge, and the amplification of the knowledge across multiple levels in organizations [3]. For successful Knowledge Management (KM), an organization needs to encourage its employees to share their knowledge through two complementary modes of organizational learning: knowledge exploration and exploitation.

Due to the unclear unit of analysis (i.e., individuals, groups, or organizations), prior KM studies have suggested abstract implications and guidelines difficult to apply by focusing on institutional KM solutions [e.g., 4, 5]. In the field of KM, organizational learning originates from tacit knowledge gained from people’s activities and experiences; e.g., apprentices learn their craft by indentifying with and emulating their masters; professionals acquire expertise and norms of behavior through periods of internships; and new employees are immersed in on-the-job training [6, p. 250]. Following the idea that organizational learning starts from personal knowledge behaviors, we posit that knowledge exploitation and exploration reflect individual behaviors to seek for knowledge needed to fulfill their tasks in organizations.

In addition, knowledge seeking behaviors to learn and create knowledge are based on formal and informal communications among people connected with each other in social networks within and beyond organizational boundaries. How individuals are embedded in social networks influences their effectiveness of knowledge behaviors in workplaces [7]. For example, the social network theory suggests that the concept of personal centrality in social networks is associated with task-related outcomes [e.g., 8, 9, 10]. The advent of various social media available on Web sites highlights their contextual effects on individual knowledge behaviors embedded in virtual social networks [11]. Thus, we observe the current reality of workplaces in which individual workers formally and informally communicate with internal and external knowledge sources through Web-based social media.

Based on the above considerations, this paper investigates two research questions: 1) how individual exploitation and exploration behaviors are effective in improving knowledge outcomes; and 2) whether individual effectiveness of knowledge seeking behaviors can be complemented by social embeddedness. To answer these questions, this paper focuses on individual workers who seek knowledge to perform their tasks in workplaces. We first specify
individual knowledge seeking behaviors, explaining
the effectiveness of exploitation and exploration on
knowledge outcomes: relevance to tasks and
pertinence to situation. Next, this paper classifies the
virtual context of social networks in which
individuals formally and informally connect to
internal and external knowledge sources. Based on
this classification, this paper proposes how individual
embeddedness in different virtual social network
types complements knowledge seeking behaviors,
thus suggesting a contingency framework. In the final
section, we discuss key contributions and
implications and suggest our future plans to further
develop the proposed framework.

2. Knowledge seeking behaviors

In discussing knowledge seeking, we follow the
idea that knowledge acquired by processing
information encourages action of interest to
individuals in workplaces [12]. The actionable nature
of knowledge reflects that individual workers apply
knowledge to their jobs, thus increasing their
effective actions and properly reacting to
circumstances [13].

2.1. Individual exploitation and exploration

Drawing on cognitive sense-making, affective
responses, and situational dimensions, Choo [6]
explained the information use for knowledge creation
as individual activities to select messages from a
body of information found by seeking behaviors. The
model of information seeking and use at the
individual level consists of three sequential stages:
the recognition of 1) information needs, which leads
to 2) information seeking, and then 3) information
use. In a similar vein, individual workers who need to
improve their insufficient state of knowledge (i.e.,
perceived knowledge gap) engage in information
seeking processes [14] to stay competent in doing
their specific tasks. We apply these stages in
proposing the effectiveness of knowledge
exploitation and exploration. According to the model,
the effectiveness of seeking behaviors can be
perceived by individuals who need to improve their
state of knowledge outcomes in performing their own
jobs.

This paper focuses on two key individual seeking
behaviors, knowledge exploitation and exploration, in
which an individual engages simultaneously and to
different degrees [15]. Knowledge exploitation refers
to an individual’s behavior for reuse of knowledge
which the individual already understands, in order to
adopt new explicit knowledge by processing
available information. Knowledge exploration refers
to an individual’s behavior for capturing new tacit
knowledge by recognizing the future value of
relevant information, and adding personal value
through self-understanding of the new knowledge,
without prior knowledge on it.

2.2. Individual knowledge outcomes

To examine the effectiveness of knowledge
seeking behaviors, we define knowledge outcomes at
the individual level. Knowledge outcomes can be
evaluated by how much the acquired knowledge aids
adaptation to task-related needs or to environmental
challenges. There are two continua of knowledge
outcomes: relevance to tasks, how much individuals
value their task-related knowledge and expose
themselves to the latest knowledge in their jobs; and
pertinence to situations, the degree to which
individuals can prepare for situational changes in
their workplaces through awareness of flexible ideas
and involvement in creative thinking. Prior KM
studies also suggested multiple dimensions of
knowledge outcomes, such as fit for use, relevance
and value towards context, and ease of use, in
evaluating its quality [13], following Nonaka’s [2]
idea that knowledge is a multidimensional construct.
The idea is also supported by the distinctions
between declarative and procedural knowledge,
explicit and tacit knowledge, general and specific
knowledge, and directions and routines. Synthesizing
prior understandings of knowledge, we explain the
perceived effectiveness of knowledge seeking
behaviors with two dimensions of knowledge
outcomes, as explained in the following section.

2.3. Effectiveness of knowledge seeking

The effectiveness of knowledge exploitation can
be examined by a dimension of knowledge outcomes,
relevance to tasks. Knowledge exploitation behaviors
encourage individuals to accumulate experience and
repeat practice in a limited knowledge domain
associated with their jobs, thus increasing their task
proficiency [6]. This seeking behavior is effective in
building up task-related knowledge with productive
utilization of knowledge already known. On the other
hand, the effectiveness of knowledge exploration can
be evaluated by another dimension of knowledge
outcomes, pertinence to situations. Knowledge
exploration enables people to understand little-known
domains and with an absorptive capacity to face
changes of situations in the future. They can manage
the uncertainty of dynamic situations in workplaces, by reducing knowledge stickiness and enhancing their flexibility towards environmental changes.

3. Embeddedness in knowledge networks

A key challenge for individuals is to locate and identify knowledge sources. Social media provides both a formal and an informal accessibility to knowledge sources by enabling individuals to know who knows what within and beyond organizational boundaries. With social media, individuals engage in knowledge networks due to the limitations of human ability to seek knowledge [16]. While media richness theory and social presence theory argue that social media promote formal and informal communication among people with beneficial social effects at work [17, 18], channel expansion theory suggests that perceived knowledge outcomes vary with individual knowledge-oriented factors [19]. Thus, we expect that the effectiveness of knowledge seeking behaviors varies by the scope of the knowledge source and the type of ties the individual has with the knowledge source. The scope of the knowledge source refers to whether knowledge seekers use public social media (i.e., external) or corporate in-house technologies (i.e., internal) to be connected with knowledge sources. With Web 2.0 collaboration tools, individuals use public social media to engage not only in social-oriented but also business-oriented knowledge networks. However, a organization can build in-house social networks restricted to its employees and members with whom it is affiliated for business relationships [20]. The type of ties with the knowledge source refers to why people use social media to be embedded in knowledge networks. IS literature suggests that people adopt technologies to realize personal value with utilitarian and/or hedonic goals. While the utilitarian goal emphasizes utility, rationality, and task-relatedness [21, 22], the hedonic goal is to feel fun, pleasure, and excitement [21, 23]. In a similar vein, individuals use different social media with formal ties for utilitarian value or with informal ties for hedonic value.

The following illustration is provided to clarify why the two dimensions, the scope of knowledge source and the type of ties with the knowledge source, are important in classifying individual embeddedness in knowledge networks. As shown in Figure 1, considering only formal ties between group members within the focal group, Agent A can directly access all other agents as knowledge sources by locating in the center of a formal knowledge network within the group. This indicates that Agent A is the most able to seek necessary knowledge in the group through formal communication with internal members. By broadening the vision from a group-wide view to an organization-wide view, we see that not Agent A but Agent B is located in the center of the internal knowledge network within the focal organization.

![Figure 1. An illustration of individual embeddedness in knowledge networks](image-url)
3.2. Four types of individual embeddedness

As Internet and communication technologies are widely adopted by the public, individuals can acquire knowledge through Web-based texts. These public Internet-based services provide knowledge contents which are structured by knowledge sources. From such public services, knowledge seekers learn from external experts for the utilitarian value, by accessing no more than what they need to know (i.e., one-way need-to-know approach from knowledge sources to knowledge seekers) [27]. In this way, such public services form a virtual knowledge network by connecting knowledge seekers with external knowledge sources. Knowledge seekers embedded in this knowledge network access knowledge contents structured by external sources in text forms on Web sites (i.e., formally externalized embeddedness).

On the other hand, a new communication channel, consisting of micro-blogging and social network sites, provides virtual spaces for informal communication with unstructured contents, similar to short catching-up and water-cooler conversation for hedonic value through friendship, membership, and common interest sharing. Such informal communication in virtual social networks encourages users to broadcast information/knowledge to share with others (i.e., two-way need-to-share approach between knowledge sources to knowledge seekers) the content which they are not likely to share or receive in a formal relationship with experts [28]. In this sense, we suggested that by using social networking services, the users can be embedded in another type of knowledge network in a different way: they are connected with informal ties to potential knowledge sources beyond organizational boundaries (i.e., informally externalized embeddedness).

In addition, organizations introduce corporate technologies, including not only intranet-based KM systems but also enterprise social networking tools, to internalize formal and informal interaction, collaboration, and accessibility of structured and unstructured knowledge contents. Using such internal technologies, individual workers can be connected with internal experts and coworkers for utilitarian and hedonic values through formal and informal relationships within organizational boundaries. In this sense, we suggest that individuals can rely on internal knowledge networks by using typical KM systems (i.e., formally internalized embeddedness) or corporate social networking technologies (i.e., informally internalized embeddedness). Table 1 summarizes four different classes of individual embeddedness in knowledge networks, as defined in this paper.
Table 1. Summary of individual embeddedness in knowledge networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Formally Externalized Embeddedness</th>
<th>Formally Internalized Embeddedness</th>
<th>Informally Externalized Embeddedness</th>
<th>Informally Internalized Embeddedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope of Sources</td>
<td>External Knowledge Sources</td>
<td>Internal Knowledge Sources</td>
<td>External Knowledge Sources</td>
<td>Internal Knowledge Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties to Sources</td>
<td>Formal Social Media</td>
<td>Formal Social Media</td>
<td>Informal Social Media</td>
<td>Informal Social Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Seeking</td>
<td>One-Way Need-to-Know Approach beyond Organizational Boundaries</td>
<td>One-Way Need-to-Know Approach within Organizational Boundaries</td>
<td>Two-Way Need-to-Share Approach beyond Organizational Boundaries</td>
<td>Two-Way Need-to-Share Approach within Organizational Boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Goal of</td>
<td>Utilitarian Value by Learning from External Experts</td>
<td>Utilitarian Value by Learning from Internal Experts</td>
<td>Hedonic Value through Friendship/Sharing Interest</td>
<td>Hedonic Value through Organizational Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature of Contents</td>
<td>Structured Contents</td>
<td>Structured Contents</td>
<td>Unstructured Contents</td>
<td>Unstructured Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking Technologies</td>
<td>Public Internet-Based Services</td>
<td>Corporate Participatory KM Systems/Technologies</td>
<td>Public Social Networking Services</td>
<td>Enterprise 2.0 with EMB Platforms/ECM Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Public Portal Sites, Public Weblogs, and Web Sites for Collective Intelligence, such as Google, Yahoo!, Wikipedia, and Others</td>
<td>Intranet-Based Information Systems, such as Corporate Wikis, Corporate Blogs, Knowledge Bases, Groupware, and Others</td>
<td>Public Social Networking Sites and Public Micro-Blogs, such as Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, and Others</td>
<td>Corporate Social Networking Sites and Corporate Micro-Blogs, such as MOSS, Yammer, Socialtext, CubeTree, and Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Contingent effects of individual embeddedness in knowledge networks

Based on the scope of knowledge source (i.e., external or internal) and the type of ties with knowledge source (i.e., formal or informal), we classified individual embeddedness in knowledge networks into four different virtual contexts: an individual worker’s 1) formally externalized, 2) formally internalized, 3) informally externalized, and 4) informally internalized embeddedness in knowledge networks. We expect that these each type of individual embeddedness complements the effectiveness of individual knowledge seeking behaviors in a different way.

4.1. Formally externalized embeddedness

As we discussed, the public Internet-based services enable individuals to access external knowledge sources with formal ties. Such sources provide knowledge on what the sources intend potential seekers to know: i.e., an one-way need-to-know premise. This formal feature is characterized by weak ties, meaning less frequent and more superficial interaction between a focal seeker and external sources. However, the weak ties provide the focal seeker with connections to a greater number and variety of potential sources in the formally externalized knowledge networks [29]. The seekers can attain more breadth and variety of knowledge [30, 31] on specific topics which they need to know. We expect that this advantage complements the knowledge exploration behavior which is insufficient to generate knowledge relevant to tasks. That is, seekers can enrich their stock of knowledge related to their tasks from formal ties to external sources, before adjusting the task-related knowledge to their situations through exploration behaviors. In addition, this can be explained by as knowledge conversion from explicit to tacit [3]. By exploring explicit knowledge which external sources provide, knowledge seekers can take advantage in generating tacit knowledge on their given tasks from the original explicit knowledge. Thus, we expect that by exploring knowledge in the formally externalized networks, knowledge seekers can not only generate situation-fit knowledge in a tacit form through exploration behaviors but also stock task-related knowledge itself which external sources provide in an explicit form through formal connections with external sources. We therefore propose that individuals, with even knowledge exploration behaviors, can acquire task-related knowledge from their formally externalized embeddedness, as follows:

P1: Embedded in knowledge networks by formal ties to external sources, individuals can be effective in exploring knowledge which is relevant to their given tasks.

4.2. Formally internalized embeddedness

Organizations have internalized features of public Web-based technologies by introducing intranet-based KM systems to support employees in capturing, sharing, and reusing information/knowledge [32]. With such technologies, individuals easily access internal knowledge sources within groups and organizations with formal ties, thus repeatedly using
codified knowledge related to given tasks [33]. Like knowledge exploitation, the formally internalized embeddedness helps individual workers to stock knowledge related to their given tasks, thus reinforcing the prime effectiveness of knowledge exploitation on relevance to tasks. We understand this condition as knowledge combination from explicit to explicit [3] because knowledge seekers exploit original explicit knowledge which internal sources provide, thus stocking the knowledge without self-understanding. This might be further helpful in stocking task-related knowledge in an explicit form through both exploitation behaviors and formal ties to internal knowledge sources. Therefore, we propose that supported by the formally internalized embeddedness, knowledge exploitation behaviors can additionally strengthen individual accumulation of task-specific knowledge, as follows:

**P2: Embedded in knowledge networks by formal ties to internal sources, individuals can enhance their effectiveness of exploiting knowledge which is relevant to their given tasks.**

### 4.3. Informally externalized embeddedness

In the recent years, public social networking services started to provide virtual communication spaces in which users can be connected with external knowledge sources related to their interests with informal channels [32]. In a two-way need-to-share approach beyond organizational boundaries, individuals can build informal relationships with external sources and participate in virtual communities to seek knowledge of personal interests [11] by managing e-mails, blog posts, wiki entries, and personal profiles. These social media enable dialogue knowledge to be transferred so that users are able to solve information fragmentation, overload, and de-contextualization problems through virtual community of practices [34]. Through informal social dialogue with external sources, users can acquire deeper knowledge and insight which are needed to face changes in their own working situations. This is because users can attain tacit knowledge on unfamiliar domains with reduced information redundancy by informally communicating with external people who are less specialized to the users’ tasks. Such informal social communications about various topics can potentially let users view their task-related matters from other angles in different situations. With informal ties to external people, knowledge seekers can share new understandings of diverse matters, thus achieving flexible absorptive capacities to change their ways of thinking by different situations. This advantage of informally externalized embeddedness can reinforce the effectiveness of pure exploration behaviors. We view this condition as knowledge socialization from tacit to tacit [3]: knowledge seekers explore original tacit knowledge which external sources provide, thus generating their own tacit knowledge with self-understanding based on certain situations. Given this, we expect that by exploring knowledge in the informally externalized networks, knowledge seekers can create situation-fit knowledge in a tacit form through both exploration behaviors and informal communications with external knowledge sources. We therefore propose that the informally externalized embeddedness will additionally enhance the effectiveness of knowledge exploration on pertinence to dynamic situations, as follows:

**P3: Embedded in knowledge networks by informal ties to external sources, individuals can enhance their effectiveness of exploring knowledge which is pertinent to their changeable situations.**

### 4.4. Informally internalized embeddedness

Organizations are currently attempting to internalize social networking media through Enterprise 2.0 with Enterprise Micro-Blogging (EMB) platforms and Enterprise Content Management (ECM) systems. Such corporate social media enable individuals to access unstructured contents by actively interacting and collaborating with coworkers in organizations [32]. Because human interaction facilitates knowledge flow in organizations [35], the use of corporate social media might be a key enabler to sustain the competitive and innovative advantages generated by enhancing the internal flow of knowledge assets [36]. Informally channelizing with internal sources, knowledge seekers can take advantage of pertinence to changeable situations, which cannot be acquired by pure knowledge exploitation behaviors. This informal feature within an organization provides knowledge seekers with strong ties which require them to maintain greater frequency and depth of interaction with coworkers [29]. The internal strong ties let a knowledge seeker get close to the center of the informally internalized knowledge network, thus providing the seeker with a high-density internal network. The high-density network is effective for seekers to exploit knowledge [37] which is already adjusted to their situations by internal experts in the same workplace. This effectiveness can also be explained by knowledge conversion from tacit to explicit [3]. That is, exploiting knowledge in the
informally internalized networks enables knowledge seekers to not only stock task-related knowledge in an explicit form through exploitation behaviors, but also generate situation-fit knowledge in a tacit form through informal communications with internal knowledge sources. Thus, we propose that through the informal internalized embeddedness, knowledge seekers can overcome the disadvantage of knowledge exploitation in generating knowledge pertinent to situations, as follows:

**P4:** Embedded in knowledge networks by informal ties to internal sources, individuals can be effective in exploiting knowledge which is pertinent to their changeable situations.

### 5. Discussion and conclusions

To understand the effectiveness of knowledge seeking in social contexts, we focused on individual behaviors to learn job-specific and situation-fit intelligence, embedded in virtual networks. This paper described how individuals seek knowledge relevant to tasks and pertinent to situations, in broad and various social contexts. We suggested that individual effectiveness in exploitation and exploration can be explained by different knowledge outcomes, their understanding of the tasks and their capability to deal with change in their work situations. In addition, individuals get embedded in different types of knowledge networks by using social media, thus enhancing the effectiveness of exploitation and exploration in different knowledge outcomes. This indicates the contingency between heterogeneous social embeddedness and knowledge seeking behaviors with two dimensions of knowledge outcomes. Figure 2 presents contingent effects of individual embeddedness on the effectiveness of knowledge seeking, as we proposed in P1-4.

![Figure 2. A contingency framework of individual embeddedness in knowledge networks](image)

#### 5.1. Theoretical contributions

Effective individual knowledge behaviors in workplaces eventually contribute to organizational competitive advantages [1]. Various formal and informal KM practices enable individuals to acquire knowledge by accessing and developing it inside or outside their organizations. This indicates that successful KM in organizations is oriented via individuals who can acquire valuable knowledge [1, 38]. Individual effectiveness represents the synergetic process of managing knowledge across individual people as KM entities in organizations [39]. Emphasizing knowledge worker productivity, Thomas Davenport mentioned in his official homepage that “…both organizations and their employees have begun to realize that KM starts and ends with individual behaviors…they are initiating programs and activities to manage personal, work-related information and knowledge…” The KBV also assumes that knowledge exists in an individual’s mental processes, indicating that the ultimate goal of KM in organizations is to accumulate and regulate such knowledge to generate individual competence for organizational improvement [38]. Therefore, we explained knowledge seeking behaviors at the individual level as key determinants of successful KM in organizations.

Prior KM studies have mainly focused on internal stock and flow of knowledge as assets closed within organizations, without consideration of its stock and flow beyond organizational boundaries. A firm is not a closed organization of collective knowledge even though such knowledge needs to be managed as a unique source of sustainable competitive advantages [40]. The search for new knowledge through external relationships among people, as well as the collaboration for knowledge exchange through internal relationships, reflects the embeddedness of individuals in social networks [41]. By enhancing knowledge flows in organizations, social media provide individuals with formal and informal ties with knowledge sources within and beyond organizational boundaries [42]. The joint understanding of internal/external sources and formal/informal ties in this paper could throw new light on the effectiveness of individual knowledge seeking behaviors in social network contexts. This exploratory approach could advance KBV with a clear understanding of the effectiveness of KM. Blacker [43] mentioned that KM studies should consider the dynamic knowledge exchange through interactive sharing and dialogue among personnel to understand the additional value and potential of knowledge resources. With various social media,
modern management and organizational practices become more dynamic and complex, thus requiring careful attention to social network structure which differently represents patterns of collaboration and communication between people [44].

5.2. Managerial implications

The newest trend of Internet use is the prevalence of social networking sites (including micro-blogging) as alternative communication media through which users post snippets of information on topics ranging from their daily life and professional work, to current events, news, and interesting observations and thoughts [28, 45, 46]. By subscribing to informal communication (such as “tweets” on Twitter between authors and followers), users stay up-to-date on their personal interests. To tap into the effectiveness of social media in work places, many companies are adopting and using corporate social networking technologies to improve knowledge sharing and social interaction within an organizational context. We considered how such organizational efforts to internalize social media are effective in improving individual capabilities in KM.

In addition, we explained key features of social technologies that individuals use in workplaces. This could impact the issue of whether typical KM systems can be replaced with various EMB platforms and ECM systems providing virtual spaces in which workers can not only communicate by blogging according to their tasks but also ubiquitously access unstructured content and data of coworkers’ blogs within organizations [47]. A key feature in knowledge-intensive firms is internalizing such informal knowledge by using social media as a routine function of business operations. Such social technologies provide meta-discourse and meta-content: e.g., social bookmarking and tag clouds, for unstructured but valuable knowledge.

Individuals can realize social capital with metaphoric advantages by using social media [48]. The performance achieved by people can vary even though they have equal ability and skill; the difference of individual performance is attributed to a better position in the social structure. In a similar vein, we suggested that individual capabilities to manage knowledge are complemented by using social media in which individual workers are formally/informally embedded in internal/external networks. This is supported by the social theory that social capital generates advantages by facilitating certain positive outcomes [49]. Individual social capital shortens transaction times by providing social, interpersonal connections between knowledge owners and knowledge seekers [32].

5.3. Future plans for developing the contingency framework

To empirically test the propositions suggested in this paper, we need to operationalize proper indicators to measure individual exploitation and exploration behaviors and perceived knowledge outcomes. For a rigorous analysis with the internal validity, we plan to control potential influences of self-motivation, knowledge gap, and task complexity as perceived by knowledge seekers to correctly examine the effectiveness of knowledge seeking behaviors [50]. Also, we need to clarify the concept of individual embeddedness in knowledge networks for better understanding of various social networking technologies. For example, we can assess the degree of an individual’s embeddedness in knowledge networks on three dimensions: tie strength, density, and centrality [29]. The tie strength refers to the frequency and depth of interaction [51] between a focal knowledge seeker and his/her given knowledge networks. The density is the ratio of a focal knowledge seeker’s actual ties to his/her possible ties [52] within his/her given knowledge networks. The centrality is defined as a focal knowledge seeker’s position in the given knowledge networks. Individual embeddedness might be clarified by these dimensions, indicating the degree of individual embeddedness in knowledge networks.

We only focus on one perspective of knowledge seekers by considering their behaviors and embeddedness in social networks. However, this theoretical view could provide much broader insights on KM by utilizing another individual perspective of knowledge providers (i.e., knowledge sources). Congruent interactions between knowledge seekers and knowledge providers might enhance their communication and collaboration for mutual aid through the use of multiple networking technologies [53]. There is insufficient research on how knowledge seekers and knowledge providers could innovatively work together exchanging knowledge in virtual settings which have become common in today’s technologically advanced workplaces. In addition, the effectiveness of individual knowledge seeking behaviors needs to be understood in organizational contexts in which individuals interact with their coworkers, teams, and organizations across multiple levels. Such multi-level insights might be required to understand organizational KM efforts and their impact on organizational performance across
different levels because KM can be observed within organizational contexts in which not only individual manage their knowledge but groups also collect and manage the set of such knowledge through collective KM processes [54]. To correctly explain the multilevel phenomena of organizational KM, it is necessary to consider interactions between a focal knowledge seeker and his/her team or organization. We believe that future KM studies can provide theoretical contributions and suggest practical implications by simultaneously considering both the perspectives of knowledge seekers and knowledge sources in social contexts across multiple levels in organizations.

6. References


